



July 2008

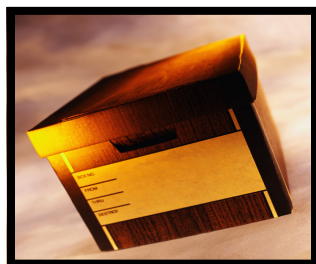
Volume 4, Issue 3

FOOD FOR THOUGHT : Get Ready, Get Set (With "My Life in a Box")

Reprinted from "Fresno Bee", April 24, 2007 by Guy Keeler

Most people know that dialing 911 brings a quick response in times of emergency. But few are prepared to rebuild their lives after disaster strikes.

"We don't like to think about death or natural disasters," says Fresno resident Laurie Ecklund Long, creator of "My Life in a Box," a planning strategy booklet for coping with adverse events. "We live in such a comfortable environment here in the central San Joaquin Valley. We've never had a major earthquake or other disasters." But even people who



aren't likely to experience the fury of a Florida hurricane or a Kansas tornado can see their lives fall apart in the time it takes for death to claim a loved one or fire to level a house. That's why Long and preparedness agencies such as the American Red Cross recommend that people develop personal plans to help them cope with emergencies.

"We had 300 families in our area who lost their homes to fire last year," says Ellen Schneider, CEO of the Fresno-Madera chapter of the Red Cross. "When I talk to groups of people, I tell them how important

it is to have their personal information on file. If my house burns and I have a CD with my insurance information, I'm going to get help faster than someone who doesn't know his policy number."

Long's workbook was created to help people compile the information they need to rebuild their lives should they lose everything in a fire or disaster. "My Life in a Box: A Life Organizer" (AGL Publishing, \$14.95) is available at Majesty Bible and Gifts in Fresno and online at amazon.com or mylifeinabox.com.

When ordinary citizens are personally prepared for emergencies, it lightens the load on health and safety professionals and trained volunteers called to help others during natural disasters, says Carla Glazebrook, executive director of the Fresno Citizen Corps.

"We haven't had a major disaster in Fresno, but we saw what can happen when people from Hurricane Katrina came here,"

Glazebrook says. "It was tragic watching them try to reconstruct their lives without any documents."

Although disaster planning makes good sense, most people put it off. Nobody likes to buy burial plots in advance or think about bad things that may or may not happen, Long says. "The majority of people are so content," she says. "They replace the filter in the air conditioner and change the oil in the car. They pay taxes and buy insurance. But they don't protect themselves by planning for disasters."

Long learned the value of such planning several years ago when 12 family members and friends died over a period of five years. Even though her father had funeral plans on file, his sudden death in 1997 left Long and her family reeling.

"It was like somebody pulled a plug," she says, describing how the unexpected death of Larry Ecklund affected

Continued on page 2

2008 Lavender Festival!

July 19 & 20 in Athol, ID

Medical Volunteers Needed!

To provide free blood pressure checks!

Various shifts available. Call Jessica at 415-5185 for more information or to volunteer!

Please Help!

"My Life in a Box"

Continued from Front Page

their lives. Even with funeral plans in place, it took two days to work out all the details, she says. There were people to notify and decisions to make -- all done under time pressure while numb with grief.

After her father's memorial service, attended by 750 people, Long says several individuals asked her how she managed to cope with his sudden death. "I realized a lot of people aren't prepared," she says. "They want to know, 'What do we do?'"

Using the knowledge she gained from her personal experience, Long put together a workbook to help others. "The Next 48 Hours" provides a practical look at what to expect after a loved one dies. The emphasis is on advance planning to minimize the stress of scrambling to find legal documents and making funeral arrangements under time pressure.

Long says the idea for "My Life in a Box," a similar guide that expands on the planning principles of her first workbook, was inspired by the effects of natural disasters in recent years.

"I have a friend in San Diego who was admiring a bright orange sky one evening," Long says. "The next thing she knew, there was an officer with a bullhorn outside telling her she had five minutes to get out of her house." Long's friend escaped the rapidly approaching wildfire but lost everything when her house burned to the ground. "It took her two years to recover," Long says. "That's when I knew I needed a box."

Long organized six files in a compact box to hold information on everything from her social security number and driver's license to insurance policies, real estate and

investments. Her goal was to assemble everything needed to begin life again if forced out of her home by a fire or natural disaster. She also realized the box would make it easier for relatives to settle her affairs if she should die.

In many homes, important

"She lost everything in the fire and it took her 2 years to recover. That's when I knew I needed a box"

papers are tucked away in places that may take days or weeks for family members to find, Long says. Putting everything in one box, with notes explaining important features of insurance policies and what to do in case of death or a medical emergency, makes things easier for others, she says.

"Most people are not well prepared to deal with a death in the family," says the Rev. Roy Livingston, associate pastor at Valley Christian Center in Fresno. "When a death occurs, they get this spike of adrenaline. Funeral homes and family members are there to help but for some, it's a nightmare."

Finding money to pay for funeral expenses and locating important legal documents are common problems for those who are unprepared, he says. "Laurie's workbook provides a simple, clear checklist of things you have to do to cope with a personal loss," Livingston says. "It helps people be prepared for the inevitable."

Long also recommends every person prepare a "getaway" bag with enough food, clothing, toiletries, water and other emergency items to last for 72 hours. If you have to leave your home, she says, the bag will provide temporary survival resources while the box of personal

papers will supply the legal information you need to rebuild your life.

The Red Cross has emergency preparedness kits available at prices ranging from \$35 to \$60. The kits are backpacks filled with basic survival supplies such as a flashlight, blanket, food bars, work gloves, a first-aid kit, water and other items. "The kits contain the basic essentials," Schneider says. "You can add personal items such as medications, eyeglasses and copies of your important legal papers. Or you can burn the information onto a CD." Schneider says every family should have an escape plan for use in the event of a house fire.

"Keep the preparedness kit near the most frequently used door, where you can grab it on your way out," she says. Long used an old carry-on suitcase to make her getaway bag. She and Schneider say it's important to check the bag at regular intervals to make sure battery-powered equipment is working, food and water are fresh and clothing is appropriate to the season. "When you reset your clock in the spring and fall for daylight savings time, check the batteries in your smoke alarm and update your disaster kit," Schneider says.

For many people, the hardest part about putting together a disaster planning box is overcoming the mental obstacle of confronting their own mortality, Long says. To help people work through these blocks, Long has organized a support group called The Box Ladies Club. For more information, go to theboxladies.com. Preparing for death or disasters does not make you a fatalist, Long says. Instead, it liberates you from worry.

"I'm not Chicken Little, and I'm not looking for the sky to fall," she says. "I wake up happy every morning because I know if something happens, I can rebuild my life and not be a burden to my family."

MRC of North Idaho lends a hand to the 2008 Ford Ironman CDA!

Several athletes and their families benefited from the medical (and non-medical) expertise present in the MRC First-Aid tent throughout the 3 day expo leading up to Race Day. Several more of our medical volunteers assisted in the Medical Tent on Race Day, working shifts that began at 6:00am June 22 and ended at 1:00am on June 23. WOW!

A big THANK YOU to those volunteers that made this partnership possible:

Gerry Curry, Linda Hamilton, Dr. Norm Dubiel, Anna Reed, Bette Inseth, Esther Twilleager, Nancy Woodrey and Frieda Agte.

Additional names of volunteers that assisted Race Day are still coming in, so to those that are not mentioned above, THANK YOU!



Here are some photos of the MRC Volunteers in action at the expo.....



*Pictured above, left to right are:
Bette Inseth, Jessica Aguirre
and Anna Reed*





Upcoming Training.....

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Thursday, July 10, 2008

6:00pm - 8:00pm

Panhandle Health District

Sandpoint, ID

**This class is designed to familiarize
volunteers with personal protective gear that
may be needed in an emergency.**

RSVP required - Please call 415-5185 or email jaguirre@phd1.idaho.gov



Panhandle Health District
Medical Reserve Corps of North Idaho
8500 North Atlas Road
Hayden, ID 83835

PRSR STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HAYDEN, ID
PERMIT NO. 104